

William Drennan

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A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE WILLIAM PITT.

SIR,

YOU are the Minister of innovation; and, from the hour that you ceased being the active agent of reform, you have become the indirect instrument of its attainment. The latter end of your administration will yet justify its beginning; what the people themselves have failed in doing, Pitt will effectuate; and the son will accomplish within the century the famous prediction of the father.

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The idea of an incorporate Union between Britain and Ireland seems purely an English measure, framed in the English cabinet (probably forced upon an Irish one) for English purposes, and from an English state necessity, brought on by existing circumstances, of which in words and works you, Sir, are the chief, or at least ostensible author; for a high and mighty monosyllable as you feel yourself to be, you are, as your great father was before you—but (and nothing but) the convenient tool of a regulated faction. In the uniform habit of cursing and mimicking the French revolution, your inverted order ends where *it* began, by decreeing the unity and indivisibility of the empire.

It is not from the bosom of a parental, providential, impartial care, from any consideration of equal relationship to the whole family of the people, that this plan has proceeded. It strikes me, and I believe it strikes you, merely as a *military* idea,



idea, as much so as the concentration of forces on the felt weakness of scattered garrisons. It arises, as I think all your ministerial measures have done, not from original genius, or fertility of resource, but from the irresistible pressure of temporary exigencies. You have ever been the passive puppet of sessional expediency; the slave and suppliant of existing circumstances, impotent to create them, and unable to control. Directed, as you seem always to have been by the directory, this warlike procedure of an Union is nothing more nor less than the reply valiant to their late levy of 200,000 men; not by any means proceeding from a magnanimous care of the common-weal, combining the philosophy of the historian with the providence of the legislator.

The existing circumstances, (beyond which boundary you were never known to stray) the period chosen for such a proposition, the secrecy long adopted, the profession

fession and habits of that person whose title of lieutenant-general very properly precedes that of general governor, the sudden transportation of the English militia—all appear to manifest this incorporate Union as, in reality, a mere *ruse de guerre*, the consequences of which, as a civil, political, *national*, measure, have not arrested—and perhaps, in the hurry of the manœuvre, could not arrest the attention of Mr. Pitt.

It has been your policy, Sir, (and I think in this instance it is patriotic) to keep, by every means, the seat of war out of England. For this end you have endeavoured of late, with indifferent success, to form continental coalitions, which, if they did take place, might avert impending danger, and whether they did or not, might still have the effect of dividing and distracting the attention of the enemy. There has for some time past been reason to fear that this island might form the field of final
 conflict

conflict between the two hostile powers or principles contending for the empire of the world ; and this measure of an Union will, in my mind, make that certain, which was but probable. It is on Irish ground, and not on English, that *you* would desire the battle to be tried—here, as a true Englishman, you would wish the arena of conflict—and here, if any where, the point of contact, and tug of war. The measure of an Union, therefore, comes not so naturally from a cabinet council, as from a council of war, for the sole purpose of placing this island *easily, expeditiously, and effectually*, in a state of military requisition, preparatory to its expected destination ; we are to be shaped and rounded into a buckler for Britain—but it is *on* the buckler the heavy strokes will fall.

You have made up your mind for the indefinite prolongation of the war. Some years have elapsed since you told the house that you were engaged in a contest which
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would not end but with your life, with all their lives; and it is perfectly obvious, that all the councils, purposes, and plans of the two great contending European powers (*your head, Sir, is one of them*) are turned entirely into a military direction, and they are endeavouring, with rival celerity, to mould, or rather to hammer, whatever is malleable in surrounding countries, not into instruments of peace, but into weapons of war. No country so great as to be safe within the wind of this commotion, none so small as not to be instigated, seduced or terrified, into this perilous, but to them profitless, contest. France wishes to assimilate abroad. Britain hastens to consolidate at home. The strength which the one acquires by expansion, the other strives to get by consolidation, by compressing all its parts closer to a common centre, by making its own centre the centre of the whole system. This is the purpose of the Union—not to give speed to the plough, or add wings to the shuttle—

but to concentrate the military force of the empire, and to organize the country so as best to favour the action of the military machine; to make an arsenal here, a post there, and an advanced redoubt of the whole island. You will no doubt direct that the Irish should be suffered, by the garrison of the island, to buy and sell, like the Jews at Gibraltar.

The Union *cannot* therefore be deferred, as you judged proper in the viceroyalty of Fitzwilliam, until the period of *peace*, because it is neither for the object or ends of peace it is *now* thought of. It is suggested in the most exasperated season of the most exasperated war, suggested from military views, under military auspices, with the proximate intention of converting the country into a complete military establishment, and the ultimate resolution of continuing this sort of regimen, until resistance of any kind, or from any rank,

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will

will be thought as nothing less than mutiny, and to be treated accordingly.

You seem to me, Sir, to have gained more accurate and extensive information concerning the state of this country, than any of our great men in office were willing, or perhaps able, to give you. You seem to have concluded that our parliament has entirely lost the confidence of the people, and, along with this, *that* controuling power necessary in a government, which *must now* assume a more than legislative severity. It is become in your mind necessary for the support of religion, good government, and social order, to brace up with an iron collar the *distorted* spine of a body politic, become already too weak to support itself, and grown decrepit even in infancy. The worse than Egyptian plague of Irish Union, may have crept into places least to be thought of, and for fear of losing any of them at a time of such fearful uncertainty,

you

you have thought it expedient to hold fast these kingdoms, like keys, by a metal ring of British manufacture. Take care! One of them at least, has been mislaid, and may have been falsified.

From that fatal, or that fortunate hour, in which it was your choice to call forth the desperate energies of the French people, rather than their first affections, which you could *at that time* have commanded; from that hour, in which your grand coalition frightened them out of all fear—but for their wives and children; urging them on to the same prodigies of natural instinct that the hen displays against the kite, and makes the lions terrible when robbed of her young—when you deemed it impossible for two nations to maintain under different forms of government the usual relations of life, or to continue bound by the sympathy of their common nature, and the interests of their common liberty; from that ominous or auspicious period of first

B 2 deviation,

deviation, you have been driven along a course of conduct rather by necessity than obstinacy or perseverance. The strong hand of destiny has silently led the minister of peace, and procrastination, into the region of hazardous innovation, gloomy antipathy, and interminable war. To this sole object are bent every passion and power of your mind, and this Union is now thought of merely to make Ireland a more productive war contribution. By what means? By simplifying the complexity of our constitution into a more complete unity and force of the executive power, without a danger of its being affected in future by impotence, irresolution, and personal qualities of chief governors, or of being any longer thwarted by a capricious, proud, and selfish aristocracy. The fierce policy of Richelieu is combined with the serpentine guile of Mazarin, in order to break down those provincial kingships (differing in name only from those of old)

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and to wheel away the obstructing rubbish of borough feudalism.

But there are no persons more different than the sanguine and the sagacious. The mind of man, or of minister, when totally absorbed in a present pursuit, loses its prescience, and is unable to see far into consequences. While Richelieu was breaking the aristocracy he was preparing the ground for the "tiers etat." While he hewed down, with his axe of power, the giant sons of the forest, he purified the putrid atmosphere by more free and full ventilation. The vigorous virtue of the soil had then room to quicken, and to luxuriate. Ireland is a similar morass of mind, rank rather than effete, and rank with a noxious vegetation. The removal of such high and overshadowing trees, as have cast a deadly mildew on all beneath, may possibly improve the face of neglected nature. The savagery of the human mind may perhaps shew fertility in something better than

than weeds, and the soft verdure of the soul may spring forth, like those varieties of grateful green, which adorn and animate our lovely island. Plans of national education ought to be co-extensive with the nation, and what of this kind has hitherto been practised is nothing more than scattering a bushel of seed in the bog of Allen. The annihilation of the aristocracy (far indeed beyond your consideration, as it was far from that of Richelieu) may turn out a providential *preparation* of the soil for the growth of a national character, joining ornament with utility, and literature with liberty, without any artificial manure or any parliamentary compost. Necker once thought of regenerating France by his edict upon *snuff*, and North imagined Ireland would be renovated by the privilege of growing *tobacco*, but perhaps you will rouse the suspended animation of the country by an excitement of a more pungent nature, and more permanent effect.

The measure appears indeed a brave one. It manifests much of the hardihood, and somewhat of the romance, which possessed the mind of your father, while the *aristocrat* might affirm it was the daring deed of a revolutionary spirit, instigated by the demon of democracy. The consequence *he* might aver must be the eventual, perhaps immediate change of the present government, through the intervention of a military despotism. The *democrat* might readily acquiesce by recollecting that the extremes of government approximate; the despot unconsciously introduces the democrat, and this fairest of islands may arise more fair from its convulsionary commotion, as from the anarchy of chaos (despotism is but anarchy) arose this fairest of worlds.

The *aristocrat* might say, " HE is deprecating change, and at the same time accustoming the mind to change. He protests against reform, and he practises revolution.

volution. He is against the alteration of
 a cornice, and he is for upsetting the con-
 stitution. Has this man conspired with
 our natural enemies to destroy our unri-
 valled constitution, and to endanger the
 natural as well as political life of our be-
 loved monarch? Did he not begin the
 war, and continue it, for the more speedy
 propagation of jacobinical republican prin-
 ciples? Did he not enter with natural
 artifice concealed under pompous phrase-
 ology (*omnium, quæ diceret aut ageret arte
 quadam, ostentator*) into that accursed coa-
 lition at Pilnitz, merely to excite the sus-
 picion of the rest of Europe, and to
 strengthen, as we may call it, the family
 feeling of whole France to one and indivi-
 sible resistance? Did he not connive at the
 manifesto of Brunswick, and the treaty of
 Toulon—for what purpose under heaven
 but to arouse the spirit general, the uni-
 versal soul of France, and to strengthen,
 by compression, the total elasticity of
 that elastic nation? Did he not (we beg
 pardon

pardon for the ungentlemanlike phrase) let the cat out of the bag, when he gave a constitution to Corsica, which might naturally excite the envy, the jealousy of Ireland, and which has probably rendered more discontented our capricious countrymen, who have never been satisfied (at least these six hundred years) with *their own* constitution, (applauded however, and upholden by a Yelverton, a Beresford, and a Forster) did he not, did not Mr. Pitt, by the display of such a democratic constitution, in which parliaments were shortened, pensioners expelled, and the basis of representation rendered nearly personal, did he not *intend* to make Ireland discontented with its own constitution? Did he not *seed* war, at first, by mouthfuls and half measures? Did he not subsidize kings to their certain destruction, and is he not become the financeering MACK of Monarchy? Did he not deliver up the emigrants of France to certain slaughter, and is he not at this moment planning the equally

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certain destruction of all that remain?—
Is this man, or is this minister, (who calls
himself a man) a friend to constitution or
to revolution? Is he to tranquillize or to
revolutionize, to resuscitate or to ruin the
empire?"

The *democrat* will, perhaps, silently
say, "This man is the indirect minister of
Providence. He is placed as if in the left
hand of God, to perform, perforce, his
goodwill to mankind, and perhaps it will
become a problem to future generations
whether in the present, liberty has been
most indebted to Buonaparte or to Pitt.—
After having delivered the greatest part of
Europe from chains, he begins *at last* with
the British empire. Rash and resolute,
bold though blind, he is resolved to cut the
riddle, to melt away from vulgar eyes the
mystery of the incoherent connexion called
the Irish constitution, which, whether it
is above our reason, or whether it is
contrary to it, had become a matter of
settled

settled faith to those political mystics, whose chief pleasure lies in perfectly conceiving, and partially comprehending. He will talk much of ranks and orders, but here he will level them to the dust. He will take the middle term out of the Irish constitution, and will leave nothing but king and people, the monarch seen only through the medium of a military rule, and the people having no other object, to which they can ascribe their grievances, than the crown. He will remove the country, by this Union, for a time, far from royal justice or mercy, but nearer to the commander in chief: the business of the state will be transacted by aid-de-camps, the whole country will be converted into a great barrack, (I hear the barrack master-general is already appointed) and the Irish representatives will be what the Scotch are, the wretched semblance of their castrated country. But such military regimen can last only for a season. The nature of government will become too

plain, which, in the guise of an independent legislature and an appendant crown, used to play so prettily with the fancy, and preserved an influence over mens' minds nearly in proportion to its unintelligibility. Democracy will then operate upon the disincumbered mind, on the simple policy of sound understanding, and they whose object it has been through life to incite their despised country to a sense of its own dignity, will act with a stronger purchase.

The subversion of an established government (the *democrat* will continue to say) is always a work of some real, and much apparent difficulty; but when such an attempt is made from the quarter of government itself, the difficulty must vanish, and, in this mortal combat of monarchy and aristocracy, the people need only be *lookers on*.—Union may therefore be the destined means of assimilating what is heterogeneous, of closing, in some measure, that great schism of social life between the
highest

highest and lowest order ; and of pouring a healing oblivion over political animosities, disguised under pretext of religion. Politico-religious ascendancies will be superseded, for a season, by the iron sceptre of British dominancy ; parties and leaderships will be re-absorbed into one superior central power ; orange and green will become distinctions of colour in the same substance ; and the clanships of aristocracies will be swept away, eventually for the good of the whole, as the desolation of hierarchical establishments has been supposed, by some, a necessary basis for the resurrection of pure and primitive christianity.

A great change is imperiously called for. The rooted moral and national evil, which must ever stand in the way of social improvement, and has been the peculiar curse of this country, is an HABITUAL CONTEMPT (worse than injury) of the common people, generated at first from the

spirit of conquest, and nursed by the same spirit transfused into penal codes, systems of monopolism, and creeds of ascendancy, until it has grown into a disease, that affects all the higher orders with hereditary contamination. It is the scrophula of the proud and powerful, which has totally relaxed and loosened all the joints of society. It has spread its acrimony among the patriots of party, the philosophers of schools, and the most sequacious professions.—The standing exception even to the barren benevolence of general speculation is—their native country; and thus it has necessarily happened that the extended family feeling, which ought to bind the different ranks of society into one neighbourhood, is resolved into an anarchy of separate interests, producing for many years past periodical and partial insurrection, and, of late, more connected and premeditated rebellion.

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The system of conquest, which gathers the fruit by cutting down the tree; the system of mercantile monopoly; which withdraws the manure from the roots; the system of influence, which blasts and withers the branches, or occasions such partial circulation of vital juice, as is seen strangely to bloom and blossom in the midst of barrenness and decay; all these systems rendering the great tree of society sapless and unproductive, are finally resolvable into that *inveterate contempt* of the lower community, which has hitherto counteracted, and must ever counteract the establishment of free, equal, and *reciprocal* society.—A great change is required, and must prove salutary from whatever quarter it comes—“*J’accepteroi le bien public des mains d’Arinaime même.*”

Ireland has been kept in a state of *savage* independence; in such a state as might best break down and destroy that *mutual* dependence, from which flows the happiness of the individual, and the true wealth

of

of nations. The inhabitants were inflated to keep the country subjugated ; the former in a state of nature ; the latter an imperial slave. Under the combined oppression of manners and of laws, the country throve into a sort of barbarous independence and public servility—no want of capital, but a partial distribution of it—much wealth, but no common wealth—much labour acquiring little property.—The palsy of indolence from the absence of that diffusible stimulus, property ; and an incapability, turned at last into an unwillingness, of transforming and fixing labour into durable possession, and capital stock—Irregular, inordinate, and exhausting *labour*, produced by and for intoxication (the source of revenue) instead of *industry* creating a little stock, slowly and regularly adding to it ; always receiving, always repaying ; the happiness of the individual, the real and imperishable wealth of the community. The ultimate object to satisfy hunger, which a root satisfies ; or
rather,

rather, much rather to supersede it by liquor (the corruption of grain) stimulating to short, convulsive exertion, corrosive to life, and instigating to the madness, that maltreats and lacerates the miserable animal, which yields its patient assistance.—The labourer not more a proprietor than the proprietor a labourer—A race of hunters, called middlemen (hunters formerly of animals, and latterly of men) introduced in the period of agriculture to invert the progressive order of society, and cut off all that close and kind reciprocity, which ought to subsist between tenant and landlord. The cultivator under the pressure of a double rent, (including tithe, of a triple one) a barbarian under the whole incumbency of social life, with tenure so precarious, tenant right so disregarded, as on the expiration of the lease instantly to give way to the highest bidder; without one sunny spot in his whole existence; his prospects ending with the darkening of the day, and all hope of bettering his situation withering and dying in his heart. Then

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ferocious,

ferocious, mad, and calling hope from desperation, changing torpid misery into active disaffection, and rising by one bound of instinct, rather than reason, from a state of abandonment and contempt, into resistance, into vindictive insurrection, into dangerous deliverance, from its *very* danger agitating the strong, but inert mind, fit only for robust vices, and now roused into a sense of enjoyment, a feeling of pleasurable elevation, by having it placed in his power to die IN BATTLE.—I come to subdue you, said Themistocles to the people of Andros, with the help of two powerful deities—necessity and force—and we, said the Andrians, have also two powerful deities—INDIGENCE and DESPAIR.

In such a state of society—if state it can be called—there must be change, and change will set the precedent to change.—The new regimen will be rigorous for a while, but it will be impartially so.—One equal monopolism will absorb the smaller, one mighty dominancy all petty ascendancies,

cies, and common calamity may produce a common country.—Aristocracy, the ally of England will desert to England, or side against her—man will remain—the ocean will remain—and the metaphysics of monarchy, will, in the event, give way to the logic of the people.

Thus, the same minister who first called forth in France the energies that fight for existence, and kept them at the height necessary for urging reform into revolution, thence into ultra-revolution, thence into a propagation of the same revolutionary spirit abroad, for their more permanent security at home—this same minister, after turning the ancient and habitual royalism of the plurality of the Irish people, at first, into ambiguous friendship, and, at last, into undisguised hostility, by feeding them with *rations* of redress, instead of total and magnanimous emancipation — this same Jehu of Jacobinism, after having sown the seed of internal Union, and forced the society of United Irishmen (of

which he himself was the founder) from the despair of reform, to the desperation of revolution ; after having hastened forward a rebellion, which he himself helped to create ; after having thrown off, with cold ingratitude, the yeomanry of the island, that *novel* volunteer army *pressed* into his service by a certain panic of courage, and at first set on foot by a few gentlemen of the bar, no doubt, with pure intentions, zealous as they were, to wear the *livery* of liberty, but *ignorant* that they were really raising a military array against a reform, which, but *for them*, had at the time been inevitable ;—this same minister, conscious that as France has got all by land, and England has all by sea, there is no point of contact for the contending powers, but at his own home, or *here*, resolves at all hazards it shall be *here*, if any where, and provisionally places the Irish nation in the hollow square of the British militia, exemplifying the very same hug of French fraternity, which in the case of Brabant had called forth his execration—this same minister,

nister, in his innovating phrensy, is now preparing to revolutionize radically, where he made it treason, radically, to reform, and, considering the apparent apathy of exquisite sensibility, as acquiescence on the part of the people, he is resolved by the rape of an *Union*, to separate those islands for ever;—the king takes the APPLE, but his servants cut down the TREE.

Thus might the democrat revolve in his mind, wrapping himself up in the cloak of silence, and quietly submissive to the stroke of political, as of natural, dissolution, certain that from the grave of despotism, liberty would soon arise in joyful resurrection. But I who am not so much a democrat as an IRISHMAN, and so far indeed an Englishman, that I would not wish a civil war *with* England to be superadded, or even to supercede, a civil war, (alas! alas! hitherto the *constitution*, and only constitution of my country) I have vainly endeavoured to keep a safe, but dishonorable, silence on this occasion; strong nature will burst through the tongue-tack
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of party, and history has recorded, that the son, though before dumb, has suddenly spoken, has cried aloud when he saw an *assassin* ready to plunge a dagger into the *back* of his father.

A sense of paramount duty, superior to the snug selfishness of professional prudence, has alone, compelled me to swim with the shoal of pamphleteers, to add one to those sprats of popularity, the capricious herring fry of the hour, that are hawked about our streets, and sworn to be alive, although the same moment that they bounce from their element, they squeak and die*.

* I have read some of those creole publications, neither a good white nor a good black, (from the number I except the pamphlet of a philosopher) and I have smiled at seeing them assume the very sentiments and often the expressions of a society it was their constant practice to vilify and calumniate; its custom was not to enter into explanation with calumny, but surely it may smile at this anomalous race of men, scattered in abundance thro' all professions, but of late multiplied so prodigiously at the bar—who hunt preferment with the sequaciousness of the hound, of surly manners, and slippery morality; a class of men equally proud and parasitical, when it sees them pursuing their venal vocation—and judging before trial the men whom in their hearts they believe upright, honest, and inflexible, it surely may smile, when it pities and forgives them.

I hate the truth of a truism, a paraphrase upon two and two making four; and such I deem *most* of the arguments *against* an Union, the painful and persevering expansion of one globule of gold over twenty and sometimes forty leaves. A sentence from Fletcher of Saltoun, outweighs, or is at least an equipoise to them all:—"In point of right it is plainly above the power of parliament to attempt any such alteration in the constitution, for the plain reason that members of parliament are but administrators, and their acts cannot extend so far beyond the power given them by their constituents, which as understood in general, to support or amend the constitution either by making new laws, or amending old ones; and though commissions to represent in parliament are understood as in general and most ample terms, yet there is one natural condition, which neither needs nor ought to be expressed, viz. that the undertakers of the commissions shall contain themselves within the verge of the constitution, for if they exceed this, they usurp a power which is not given them

them—they violate the constitution, they annihilate the constituent, and they are *punishable as usurpers and traitors.*”

This Union, then, is a subject on which, without feeling much, any man can reason a little, or any child—and there is a sportive analogy in the term Union, which may even make it a subject interesting to the fair. But I think, and I say, that the question, which concerns the being of a country, is, in reality, a question of HONOUR, of that high honour, including every other virtue, which, I had almost said, is weakened by argument, and is approached by argument, only *to be weakened and drawn from its citadel*. The nation, that does not feel the debasement of the very proposition, deserves to suffer the prostitution: for as certain proposals may be made to individuals, in which the injury, monstrous as it is, is lost in the insult; which by the one sex can be repelled only by a look of ineffable contempt, and by the other, with a blow—so there are affronts to nations, on which controversy is contamination; as if we could
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be reasoned into making a capon of our country—an Eunuch of Ireland—A man of high office, and a prototype of Bar, or rather Bear, wit, is reported to have, some time ago, made use of a threat towards his country, the vulgar language of which shall not pollute my paper, though it does my remembrance, and which may have suggested to you, Sir, the propriety of such an operation, as may, in five minutes, set us free, for ever, from the prominent instigation to riot and rebellion.

Such an insidious and impudent proposal, to swell the loins of the country at the expence of its virility, I think, and I say, should be as revolting to the nation, as to a man—and—“if in the infatuated animosity of parties, (which now virtually concentrate) all regard to the public be not totally and irrecoverably lost, if that kind of mean selfishness, which scarce deserves to be dignified with the name of avarice, holds not the

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possession of every breast, to stamp the island with indelible infamy," your proposition may raise that Hibernicism, which it means to annihilate; and a love of country, which, hitherto, has been really, and in good truth, made up of *antipathies*, may be changed into the sympathy of common interest well practised and properly understood; an Union against Union; a combination of knowledge, sentiment, and natural feeling, against the coalition formed between state craft and state necessity, to annihilate Ireland for the good of the Empire, *that is*, as far as ever I could understand the word, for the good of England, by its selfish self England—England—that you have engaged, body and soul, in the present war; that forgetful of her own liberties, as well as the mode she took to acquire them, was, at first, made an accomplice, and at last, a principal in attacking the liberties of another nation, until a war, which, originally, neither just nor necessary, became necessary tho' not just;

just; necessary to her own existence, necessary to her own salvation; what had begun with a dispute of diplomacy, and the etiquette of an ambassador—England, the land of Alfred, and of Edward, and of Locke, led, or driven, from step to step, until she finds it necessary for her life to arm the minister with a plenary dictatorial power over privilege, person, and purse, and well pleased to find Ireland about to add still greater strength to the same ministerial power in a British Parliament, to sit a ghastly skeleton of representation, staring that of poor Scotland in the face (a people deserving of a better fate, like their own Firs, hardy, tough, and durable, resistive to the storm, and of most value in soil the least profitable)—England, who, by the conduct of her militia (I shudder at the name of ancient Britons) seems to have willingly connived at the gradual extension, and *judicious* organization of such a military force in this country, as might, when a *proper* op-

portunity offered, be made instrumental to complete and continued subjugation—England, in fine, attaching her fortunes to the fate of a Mr. Pitt, and delivered up to her own fate by the man of the people—if the people were men.

Let me stop to bow to that character—I need not name him—greater, far greater, in his voluntary exile, than Charles, or Diocletian. I had rather divide a cabbage with this man, than a cabinet with that other. I look up to his majestic and magnanimous mind with the same eyes, that travellers view the Dome of the Pantheon at Rome. When they enter, nothing at first surprises them. They see not immediately its greatness; its length, breadth, height, so nicely proportioned, that they exactly fill the eye, and the more it is attended to, the longer it is examined, its grandeur is increased, and their astonishment. While, perhaps, for the pleasure of contrast, they turn their

What is
he now?
1804

their view to a tall, ungainly, Egyptian obelisk, deeply indented with mysterious emblems, and inscrutable hieroglyphics.

I return to say, that patriotism may be elicited from the clash, not of arms, but the embrace of antagonist principles ; that instead of perpetuating a hostile mind in the people, who are to live and die in the same land, who hang as it were on the same maternal breast, they ought, and they shall be actuated by a fraternity, a reciprocity, a mutuality of mind, that neither an intrinsic interference, whose policy, at all times, and particularly now, is to conquer by division, nor an aristocratized christianity shall continue to make the hatred of our neighbour, the only bond of Union, and a repulsion to all other sects the principle of our adhesion to each other ; that the fraternal spirit of christianity shall no longer be ill exchanged for the interest of an order, or the support of a foreign domination under the pretext of an Union ;
that

that men shall not place their Christ in the clergy, nor their country in an over-channel cabinet, and that Ireland will be no longer that monstrous and unnatural being, who has lost the interest, which attaches every creature to itself, and who is always in danger of destruction from his own hands. I think, and I say, that now is the time, and may never be recalled, in which Irishmen can enter into a solemn league and covenant high enough to rise beyond, to plane above all sectarian selfishness; broad enough, and long enough to include this whole island; and deep enough to undermine a minister, who is himself the servant of servants, and the tool of men, he despises.

I say, that our different sects in religion have been hitherto doing little else than tearing in pieces the seamless garment of our Saviour; and in politics, our poor Ireland has been throned to the hounds of party, as the reward is flung at the death of the deer,

where every one pulls and tears what he can for himself; that now is the time not only to break down that Black Art of repelling man from man, by the power of certain magical rather than moral words, making the children of one God, and the people of one country cordially *hate* each other; but now also is the time to drive Piles into the uncementing sand of society, on which foundation, the arch of national independence, connecting the north and south, in one level high road of mutual convenience, may rest in stable tranquillity. For otherwise sand shall succeed to sand, and nothing but sand shall ever remain.

I say to those, who will understand me, that they should now judge in what manner it is for their interest to act, when they see every lesser job, like little fish, about to be swallowed up, and for ever ingulphed in the voracious maw of this great *Kraken* of a job, which was before deemed by many an
imaginary

imaginary being, but is now seen swimming with Pontoppidan Pitt upon its back, across *our* channel, for still the half of it is ours. I shall say no more upon *this* subject, for the present---Let the Orange spirit say as much in the spirit of peace, and Ireland will yet be---Ireland. Otherwise let it continue the BACKSIDE of Britain.

I aver, Sir, in your *hearing*, that as it was the bigotry of the Protestant which generated the Papist, and the partiality of ascendancies which begot civil distraction, it is now the time for all parties here to break through the suspicions of ignorance, and instead of looking at the world through Britain, to look at Britain through the world. Sir, for my own part, I will follow the genuine principles of the British Constitution, even when they emigrate into France; and I will glory in my estrangement from your island, whenever the dogmas of French despotism are transfused into Britain. When, under such auspices,
or

or rather the shade of such omens, I see a plan handed from an English minister to an English-Irish minister, like to you in nothing, I know of, but in being young, thin, and self-sufficient; when I see, not an East-India bill, but a *West-Britain* bill, preparing for dissolving not only all principles of constitution, but the constituency itself; for removing the seat of government *for ever* from the soil, and eternizing the provinciality and servitude of my country, under an administration unalterably English, and everlastingly conforming to the interests, prejudices, and jealousies of the seat of sovereignty, leaving us a lease of lives renewable for ever of all the *abuses* of our wretched administration, and taking from us the fee-simple of our country, making it utterly, and ever impracticable for Ireland to manage her own affairs in the way she judges most suitable to her own interest; *when* I see all this leze-nation attempted, and about to be executed, merely because this mill-stone war is tied round the neck

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of

of the minister, and that *he* wants both Islands not so much to stand or fall together, as to sink both to the bottom with himself; if I could not suddenly untie the knot which bound me to him, I should wish, not for the dagger of Aristogiton, which I detest, but for the cutting sword of Alexander. I should say to my king, let not this infuriate minister drive you to the breach of your coronation oath, by subverting a constitution, which you have sworn to defend; and I should say to the people, for liberty can never wholly be destroyed without the wilful and treacherous co-operation of the people, unite or die.

Push away the invading minister, as you have done the invading foe. Drive him into the ocean. Let not either republic or monarchy, transgressing their limits, cajole or conquer your country. While I breathe this short breath of life, I will uphold, as my strength can uphold, and an honest man is
a strong

a strong one, the republican part of the British constitution, nor shall it be the commentaries of an academician, or the fashion of the day, which shall make the principles of John Locke wither in my hand, or in my heart; but I would neither give up my country to a directory, or to a divan, to millions of men or to a single man, who happens to be sole minister. And when I figure in fancy the Genius of my beloved and calumniated country taking his station on some mountain of our western coast, that, in calm majesty, sees the great Atlantic break at its feet, and casting his eyes on the geographical pre-eminence, and general aspect of his island, set as a jewel in the most temperate part of the temperate zone, gifted with the fair and overflowing fertility of nature, with such well tempered air, such safe and large ports and havens courting the trade of the world, such rivers, and such lakes, I should not be surpris'd that if a little minister should send to him for such a country, he would answer,

—COME AND TAKE IT—YES—YES—my country, “most choice, forsaken; and most “loved despised;” you shall yet have your avengers.

Sir, I do think and I do say, that if the cruel alternative be proposed to me, unite for ever with England, or separate for ever, I would say—*separate*, in the name of God and nature. If such be the alternative, let no little pert pre-eminence say to me, “look at the map,” and attempt to reconcile the perfidy of policy to the policy of geography—Why I would answer—If I look on the *map*, Britain belongs to Ireland, but I detest this property of nations, and, in return for an Irishman insulting his own country, I shall assert that the separation of the governments would accomplish the *Union* of the British and Irish people. Good God! what a paradox!—true—but a paradox is not always contrary to truth; it is only contrary to received opinion. The true system of the world

was long a paradox to philosophers as well as to the people, and when the Genoese pilot, in pursuit of the East Indies, steered due *west*, he steered most paradoxically, but, while he was losing one world, he made another. I will venture the paradox, and steering due *west*, I will assert that the interest of *Britain* lies in the real and absolute independence of Ireland, on the immediate renunciation of all governmental connexion, a just compensation for past treatment, but also the truest wisdom, by securing our friendship in a *solitary* world. The stranger, the foreigner, the supposed foe would then become fellow countrymen, fellow citizens, and brothers; and our greater population and capacity to purchase would produce to Britain a better market, (to *her* supreme felicity,) for there is not a country, which grows and increases, that does not, in its collateral consequences, augment the industry of the whole world.

The inherent sovereignty of Ireland *might* become the salvation of Britain; an Union
will

will accelerate her destruction. What is this wished-for monopolism? The monopolist of the whole world would turn it into a desert, and were any one, or any people, to purchase as it were the whole lottery of life, they would, in the end, be a loser. I shall not now enter farther into the subject, but I do assert that the great perfection of this sublunary system would be such a law of nations, recognized and supported, as might cover the universality of *independent* countries, fulfilling their duties and asserting their rights, with its tutelary authority, defending the weakest from the most ambitious, and guaranteeing to all the full possession of their independence, under the ægis of a common power—and hear me for once, Ireland! when I say—happiness never can be had by a people whose sovereignty does not rest—WITHIN THEMSELVES.

“ But if—I quote from Vattel—any one would ravage from a nation an essential right,
or

or a right, without which it could not hope to subsist, if an ambitious neighbour threatens liberty, and resolves to subdue it, that country will take council only from its courage; it will not condescend to wait for conferences on so odious a pretension--- It will bring into this quarrel all its efforts, its last resources---It is risking every thing only to listen to the least proposition--- Then they might truly say, *una salus, nullam sperare salutem.*"

Sir, I take my leave of you---I write in the hurry of my heart---I know, that, the same day of her answer to the commissioners, Queen Anne dictated an order of council, that whoever should be concerned in any *discourse* or libel, or in laying wagers relating to the Union, should be prosecuted with the utmost rigor of the law. Until the same, or a similar inhibition be issued, I may speak, and I will say, that as we have seen smaller triangles erected in our public places, and stained with the blood of our countrymen, you are
going

going to construct one great TRIANGLE from these three kingdoms, to which are to be tyed the majesty and faith of the Irish monarch, and the inherent sovereignty of the Irish people—yes—I will pursue you through the measure---I will divulge you at least through this island, and if the dying words of a single Irishman shall be able to revive your remembrance, or awaken your conscience either as man or as minister, what is to be expected from the last cry of an expiring nation?—

I am your humble servant,

But not yet—Your Slave—

WILLIAM DRENNAN.

Marlborough Street, 19th January, 1799.



